



**March, 2012**

## **Tradition and Modernity in R.K. Narayan's Famous Novel-the Guide**



**\* Banwari Lal Swami**

**\* Research Scholar, Singhania University, Rajasthan**

### **Introduction-**

The Guide is about the quest for identity by Rosie, the daughter of a traditional Devdasi, but educated, elegant, and beautiful, with an M.A. Degree in Economics. She is a modern girl married to a rich scholar involved in archaeological research who provides her the modern amenities of life, and security of a home, and wealth. They are married, not according to the traditional rituals, but in the office of the Registrar of Marriages.

Rosie is not like Savitri of The Dark Room, living like a slave of her husband. Her one passion in life is Indian classical dance, which is not approved by her husband, Marco, who considers it below the dignity of his status. Further, he thinks that she does not understand dancing, and has no training in it. He does not consider it an art at all. He thinks that she wishes to rival him. In fact, despite his education, he is a conservative husband who wants her to be subservient to him. He also neglects her. This is made up by Raju, the guide, who finds out her passion for dancing, and provides opportunities for her self-expression, in order to possess and exploit her, for money and sex. No doubt, he provides to Rosie all the succour when he is deserted by Marco at the Railway platform. He takes great risk, and invites the ire of his mother and maternal uncle, and supports Rosie.

It is owing to his possessive nature that he does not show the book by Marco to Rosie, and forges her signature on a legal document sent by Marco's lawyers, for releasing her jewellery from the Bank. The discovery of the forgery and Raju's arrest is another moment of crisis for her. She does all she can to save him, but after the conviction of Raju, she leaves the town for good, and continues her career indepen-

dently. She does not require either Marco, or Raju. She is not according to the pattern of traditional ideals of Indian womanhood - Sita, Savitri, and so on, whose stories are narrated by Raju's mother. She is a rebel, and a modern woman in search of her identity, which she achieves.

The Rosie-Raju liaison seems to parallel Ravana's abduction of Sita; and Keechak's; as well as, Duryodhan's attempts at the molestation of Draupadi. These episodes of The Ramayana and The Mahabharata seem to form the core of the relationship of the two characters in the novel. The mythical legends have been given the form of a modern story.

As a Swami in the village Mangala, where sainthood is thrust upon him, Raju reaches a point where he is involved in fasting and prayer, for the sake of others, and not for any personal desires for fame, money, or sex. He becomes the real guide, in the spiritual sense, and attains illumination, and the rains come. Raju dies at the end. Narayan has said that the novel was inspired by the ending of a severe drought by prayer and fasting. Graham Greene had advised that Raju should die at the end.

### **Conclusion-**

The novel deals with the traditional faith of the people in religion, worship, and saints, that provides scope for fake swamis also.

It is pointed out that trickery recoils upon its practitioner, as in the case of Raju. Husband and wife have to respect each other if they wish to live a happy life. If this does not happen, mere academic and artistic achievements are not enough. Modern educated women must find their identity in moral integrity. The novel reflects the traditional Indian domestic life, and the ironies of modern Indian life.